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HISTORICAL SERMON,

CONCERNING THE HISTORY OF THE

First Presbyterian Church,

AT SUSQUEHANNA DEPOT, PENN'A,

From its Organization, Oct. 2d, 1851, Until July 2d, 1876,

A Period of Twenty-Five Years.

PREACHED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 2, 1876, BY THE PASTOR,

REV. P. H. BROOKS.

MILITARY AND NAVAL

First Presbyterian Church

AT 2500 MARKET STREET, PHILADELPHIA

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THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

A SERIES OF LECTURES

BY

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

LECTURE

TEXT, DEUT. XXXII, 7.

“Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations, ask thy father and he will show thee, thy elders, and they will tell thee.”

It is our duty not to allow the instances of God's goodness in the days that are past to perish. Moses often by inspiration turned the attention of the people to the days before the flood, and David sung of the days of old in the wilderness, and Peter refers back to the days of David; and Stephen and Paul in their sermons speak very minutely of even centuries gone. If there are no historians the church must be an historian, and when there are chroniclers, the church of God must not cease to put her devotional construction on the things of the past. It is the duty of parents and aged men and officers in God's house to tell their children about the goodness of God to them and to their churches.

“It is due,” Dr. Marsh forcibly remarks, “to the memory of the fathers who suffered for their faith in the early history of the country; it is due to all who have entered into their labors with equal faith and courage in later times; it is due to ourselves, and to all that come after us, that an earnest, and united effort shall be made to gather up the lessons of the past before they are lost; to put them into permanent and accessible form, and thus to perpetuate in the Church a historic life that shall grow strong with the increase of years.”

As these discourses are to be sent to the Presbyterian Historical Society for preservation and for reference, they should be, as nearly as possible, uniform in size. The largest number will undoubtedly be printed by the congregations for whom they were prepared; and the pages should be of the usual octavo size. At least two copies should be transmitted to the Society. But what we more particularly want is, that each pastor shall furnish a complete and faithful record of his own church, from its organization to the present time, informing us when and what led to its formation; the character of its members; sketches of all its ministers, with an account of their influence and work in the church; the same of the more prominent members of the session and church; names and services of the men and women who have been reared up in the church, and occupied useful and honored positions; the times of revival enjoyed; the works of benevolence sustained at home and abroad; the part the church has borne in education and in all moral reforms; in a word, everything that has made it a power for good in the community, and a blessing to the world.

HISTORICAL SERMON.

Great care should be exercised respecting *dates*. Investigations of this kind are peculiarly exposed to error. Not unfrequently members of the same family, not to say of the same church, will confidently assign different dates to the same event, and if a written record cannot be appealed to, unusual discrimination will be required. We should remember, however, that we are collecting valuable material for history, and that time and labor should be freely given, in order to make the record so reliable that no future inquirer will have reason to question the fidelity of the local historian."

By this recommendation of our General Assembly, that the first Sabbath in July, 1876, each pastor shall preach an historical sermon concerning the origin and progress of his church, each minister is to contribute his portion to a general history of Gods deeds among American Presbyterians.

About three years after the Erie Railroad was completed through Susquehanna Depot, Pa., although the village was small, it gave promise of growth, and many of the citizens began to feel the need of one or more churches with a stated ministry. Early in the spring of 1851, the Rev. Burr Baldwin, a Presbyterian missionary stationed at Montrose, Pa., came once in three weeks to preach in a school house on "Church Hill," located near the north-east corner of the present Catholic church. There were at that time about a dozen buildings on "church hill." The brow of the hill now occupied by our Zion was covered with the dense bushes of the laurel, the hidden fragrance of the trailing arbutus, and the tall, needle-leaved pines, previous to 1851. Subsequently it was cultivated and several harvests of corn were gathered from it before it became the consecrated spot for a higher cultivation, and still more precious harvests. The land on church hill originally cost \$20.00 an acre, it is now estimated at \$3000.00. Mr. J. Harvey Smith donated the land for the church. In the deed of the property, if Presbyterians cease to occupy it, it is to revert to him or his heirs, and a small portion of land directly in front of our church and at the side of the Catholic church is held by both, and can never be exclusively owned by one of them. There is not much land in the U. S. to which Presbyterians and Catholics have an equal claim. In the summer of 1852 the building of our church edifice begun. The efficient building committee appointed by the subscribers, consisted of Messrs. F. A. Ward, D. W. Crocker, Henry Perrine, J. H. Smith and Aaron Myers. Mr. Boyd, of Montrose, drafted the plan and specification, Mr. Herman Newell took the contract for building the church, and it was enclosed in December at a cost of \$1,700.00. One of the workmen is still with us, Mr. Edgar E. Barton. Mr. J. H. Smith, and Mr. Henry Perrine headed the subscription with \$100.00 each. Forty-nine names stand on the subscription list. William Jessup, of Montrose, contributed \$20.00; Mr. J. Ransom, of New York City, \$25.00; Mr. Charles McKinney, of Binghamton, \$10.00; Messrs. Brant & Schlager \$50.00, and we find a number of names of persons still living here, who also contributed liberally. Robert H. McCune, Benjamin Gregory, C. S. Bennett, Thomas Carr, M. S. Sherman, Alfred Stanley, John T. Bourne, others who have removed, or died, and still others whose names are not upon this list. The public thus was very favorable to the enterprise. While the foundation was being laid, in the autumn of 1851, the importance of a church organization was again agitated and on Saturday evening, Oct. 1st, 1851, after due notice a meeting was convened, the 1st chapter of James being read with some brief remarks, followed with a number of prayers, it was resolved unanimously to proceed without delay to organize. A part of the evening was spent in hearing from each person who desired to become associated with the contemplated organization, a relation of their experimental acquaintance with

religion. They concluded to have the church constituted on the Sabbath following, when after the sermon from Rev. B. Baldwin, the church was constituted by prayer and declared duly organized as a church of Jesus Christ. As there were but two *male* members the election of ruling elders was postponed. The following persons entered into covenant: Mr. and Mrs. E. Bonnell, by letter from Schenectady, N. Y., Mrs. Marcia C. Barnes, by letter from Binghamton, Miss Emma J. Noble, from the M. E. of Lanesboro, and by profession of their faith, Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Myers, Mrs. Frazier, Mrs. Alida Mayhew, eight members. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper was administered; the services were very solemn and a deep impression was made on the congregation. The little handful of believers started to work for Jesus and to lean on the arm of their Beloved as they came up from the Wilderness. They adopted the manual of the Presbytery of Montrose as their confession of faith. In the next year, 1852, Sept. 5th, the frame of the church was raised, but the interior was not plastered until the spring of '53. Funds came in slowly and only four members joined in '52, and it was a period of clouds and darkness. Some individuals feared they would be compelled to sell their building, but in the hour of thick darkness, when God seemed farthest away, he was walking between the riven pieces of sacrifice, swinging His lamp of the promises by the darkening furnace.

1853.

was a bright year for the young church. In April 1st, Rev. Edward Allen began his labors regularly here as a missionary of the Philadelphia Branch of the American Home Missionary Society. It was in this year that the church edifice was dedicated with suitable and impressive ceremonies, August 10th. During this year fifteen joined the church, among the members Mr. H. W. Brandt, Mr. Jacob Schlager and their wives, by certificate. They began at once to take that prominent interest which has always characterized them, and to rescue the church in her financial need. It did appear clearly that God in his providence had sent these brethren in *just the right time*. It was also in this year that the church was *fully* organized by the election and ordination of its first elders and deacons. The elders were Mr. Jacob Schlager and Aaron Myers, and deacons, Mr. H. W. Brandt and J. Schlager; they were elected for the limited term of two years. The *limited* term of eldership has always been the practice of this church rather than the general habit in Presbyterian churches of electing elders for life, and this system has gradually grown in favor in the churches at large, and there are no traces of any injury it has ever produced here. One of the elders was elected to serve both as an elder and deacon at the same time, but Presbytery disapproving of it as unscriptural, subsequently the deacon's office was abandoned, and the deacon who was not an elder was immediately inducted into the office of ruling elder.

1854.

The Lord blessed his people this year with the first revival of religion. *Nineteen* were added to the church. I find the following note in the minutes: "This precious work of grace took place at the tannery of Brandt and Schlager on the Starrucca. Some of those converted had but recently arrived from Germany and could understand but little of English, but the word preached as well as expounded from house to house, was faithfully interpreted. Some were Roman Catholics, and Mr. Raphael Kessler had been designed for the priesthood; he subsequently became, and still is a Presbyterian clergyman. Their conviction of sin was very deep and the relation of their christian experience was deeply affecting.

1855.

There is no record of any members joining the church this year. The first full Board of Trustees were elected according to law. The first mention is made of salary—\$300.00 and aid from the Home Mission Board, for the Rev. Geo. N. Todd, who began his ministerial labors here Dec. 1st, 1855. Thus passed the first five years, having two ministers, and receiving 46 members—no discipline, no divisions. In 1855 the Ladies' Sewing Society was organized with the following officers: Mrs. Harriet F. Seymour, Directress; Mrs. Austin King, Ass't.; Miss Perrine, Treasurer; Mrs. G. W. N. Curtis, Secretary; Mrs. Wm. Outwater, Ass't. The Next 5 years begin with 1856.

1856--1861.

This year was harmonious and prosperous. *Sixteen* were added to the church. During these five years Rev. George N. Todd was stated supply three of them, and the Rev. Jesse Brush, the first pastor, over one year and Rev. Horatio Pattengill began his labors in 1861. The Rev. Geo. N. Todd ceased his labors in this church April 1st, 1859. He appears to have been a successful and devoted laborer for Christ. He had the pleasure of receiving fifteen at one communion. During his ministry of four years, forty-nine joined the church by profession and letter. The Rev. Jesse Brush, the first pastor of this church, was installed Aug. 31, 1859, by the Presbytery of Montrose, after being ordained. Rev. S. H. Cox, D. D., of Ingram University, preached the sermon. Rev. Henry Newcomb, of Hancock, N. Y., charged the pastor, and Rev. T. S. Wood charged the people; Rev. Mr. Riley, of Montrose, made the ordaining prayer, and the constitutional questions were propounded by Rev. M. McCreary of Great Bend, Pa. During his brief pastorate (2 years) twelve were added to the church. During this period the office of the deacon was dispensed with. The first case of discipline appears; the female prayer meeting starts here upon its mission of auxiliary prayer. The elders were re-elected, deacon Brandt was ordained and installed as ruling elder, and Messrs. Smith and Thatcher were added to the bench of elders. The following persons served the church as trustees,—new names: Robert Wallace, Samuel Smith, Henry W. Brandt, Augustus Gilbert, A. T. Back, and S. B. West. The sewing society and prayer meeting held their place, and during these five years sixty-nine were added to the church. The next five years begin with 1862.

1862--1866.

These years embrace the period of the ministry of Rev. Horatio Pattengill. He began his labors here as stated supply, June 1st, 1861, and closed them June 1st, 1866. This was a very prosperous period, financially. The salary at the beginning of it \$550.00, and donations \$150.00, and closing with \$800.00 with Mr. Pattengill, and \$1000.00 for Rev. S. H. Moon, whose ministry began in the closing months of 1866. For the first time we find complete statistics of collections—if \$2500.00 is quite near the estimate of money raised for the first ten years, for these five the entire amount is \$4123.00. Twenty feet were added to the church building at a cost of \$723.00—from \$60.60 to \$80.00 were contributed to the Sabbath school fund each year. The beautiful maples surrounding our church and parsonage were planted by Rev. Mr. Pettingill. I often thank him for their pleasant shade, and may his memory and the memory of all our pastors aid in some human measure to temper the wintry blasts and summer suns as they shall pass over you and yours. These years are marked with large contributions for Union Refugees, for Freedmen, and like objects, and I should judge from the books of the church that you then had an unusually

strong Union man in this pulpit, who gave no uncertain sound on the stirring issues of the war of the rebellion. Usually times of building are somewhat unfavorable for spirituality. The first four years of Mr. Pattengill's ministry, notwithstanding his popularity, were years of the fewest conversions of any four in the history of our church; there were less than ten joined the church by conversion in all the four years combined. But the fifth year God blessed his ministry and his people with their second revival, and in one communion twenty-eight members were added, the largest number thus far, and perhaps ever received at one time; fifty-five during the five years joined this church. Mr. Pattengill had a few eccentricities, was what is generally demonstrated a "self-made man"—possessed considerable oratorical ability, and many of his short, bold sentences are remembered and quoted to this day. So God lengthened our cords and strengthened our stakes, and said "enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitation, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left."

1866-1871.

These years embrace the pastorate of the Rev. Solomon H. Moon. The prominent characteristics of these five years were, first, large accessions by conversion during '66, '67 and '68. In '68, 55 members were added, nearly all by profession of their faith. It was the third blessed period of revival with which we have been visited. The largest number of these additions were from Harmony; 118 during the whole period enrolled their names for Christ, and about 100 of these by confession. The largest recorded collection was for Foreign Missions—\$85.00. In the years '69 and '70 but few joined the church, and the salary began to droop. The church expenses and collections, as far as ascertained from the books, were \$5185.00. How differently the Holy Spirit blesses his people and his ministers. Rev. Mr. Pattengill's largest accessions were in his last year, while with Mr. Moon the largest was in the third year of his pastorate. There has been a steady growth. Mr. Moon received in one year 55, just as many as Mr. Pattengill received during his five years. The Lord used them to do each a blessed and important work. Mr. Moon appears to have been a vigorous doctrinal preacher, full of fresh zeal from the seminary, growing in power from year to year. He performed a great amount of labor while here, and he also found in the home of Elder Brandt a practical and personal exposition of the text "a good wife cometh from the Lord." The Rev. R. Kessler and Rev. Tho. Wing had a similar experience in the same home.

1871-1876.

These last five years embrace the period of the pastorate of the present incumbent. For the ten years previous and for three of these years our town has continued to grow rapidly, and was in a very prosperous condition. This has been succeeded by two of the darkest years Susquehanna Depot has perhaps ever known financially. This period has been one of enlarged liberality to our Boards, contributing \$1189 to them, enlargement in building and expenses generally reaching \$19,933—\$7,000 more than in all the previous twenty years' history of our church combined, and still 110 members have joined our church. The points of prominent interest are the building of a parsonage, and the organizing and erection of the Harmony church at Brandts, Pa., where a new swarming began from our mother hive here. The Providence of God seemed to smile with special favor on both of these enterprises. All the people seemed to be moved by God in regard to them both, and we all now see that one year later for either of them would have been too late. In regard to the parsonage, there

was no discord in selecting the location. The building committee, consisting of Messrs. J. B. Gregg, Augustus Gilbert, Gaylord Curtis, Jacob Schlager, Wm. Emery and Geo. Crandall, contributed over \$1100.00, and the Ladies Sewing Society gave over \$1100.00. In a few months after this the first manse ever builded in this town was completed, and the \$2900 was paid; and, as Edward Everett once said to the citizens of Buffalo, so we would say of that manse: "May the summer sun shine softly upon its roof, and the winds of winter rap gently at its doors." So in like manner the call of God could not be mistaken when he said to our members in the Starrucca valley, "rise and build," and on May 4th, 1875, the committee appointed by presbytery, consisting of Rev. J. G. Miller, E. D. Bryan, A. J. Schlager and P. H. Brooks organized the forty-six members from the mother church, into a separate church. Already a precious revival had begun in the new Zion. The corner stone was laid Tuesday Aug. 25th, 1874, with appropriate and interesting services, and was subsequently dedicated free of debt. The building is of brick, durable and beautiful, costing about 5,000. They have been greatly blessed of God, have now a membership of 66, and are paying a salary of \$800.00. The Rev. Walter Peterson is preaching very acceptably as a stated supply with them. Messrs. Brandt and Schlager could not have erected a more suitable and enduring monument to the goodness of their God in their valley home, which they have redeemed from a wilderness, and in which they have been greatly prospered by the Lord in His blessing their tireless industry, economy and labor, with increasing wealth. In the history of our church here, as well as in their new church at Harmony, we all cheerfully concede, under God, the first place to Messrs. Brandt and Schlager. I have not space to mention all that they have done. At the dedication of their church, or of God's church in their place, after the people had given liberally, there remained a debt of \$2600.00, and these brethren paid each \$1300.00. They now contribute \$300.00 each annually of salary, and in this church they saved our building from being sold when they first united, and they lifted the debt from our organ. They, with Mr. Gaylord Curtis, Esq. have recently placed a new roof over the sanctuary, and they have served the church officially, as clerk, deacons, elders, trustees for twenty-three years. Their prayers have been a still richer blessing, that cannot be measured as we can measure their gifts. And as there are no two men in this county who for the past twenty-five years have done more for churches, so no other two have been more richly blessed in this world's goods. It is a living proof that those that give cheerfully to the Lord, it shall be given unto them good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over shall men give it unto their bosoms. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. In all temporal matters, as a long and faithful adherent of this church stands the name of Mr. Gaylord Curtis; for twenty-three years he has aided it more than any person residing in the town, and for many years he has served it as a trustee, which office he still holds. One of his gifts is ever before me, and often while preaching in the hushed stillness of the Holy Spirit's presence, in this room I can hear ticking like an echo to the unconverted or the halting, come now, come now, come now. God's best time is the ticking present. We have not been in the habit of making many appeals to the general public for aid each year, but when we have, we have met with a generous response, generally. We could not be fully mindful how the Lord hath helped us hitherto, if we failed to mention that recently, about the time that Harmony church was organized, and by deaths and removals, and a reduction of force in the in the shop, when 83 members had thus gone from us, the Lord Jesus, by a kind Providence sent us from a dis-

tance some members and friends who have proved friends indeed, not only to this church, but also to us. May they tarry with us! Our church has been blessed in its elders. In all these twenty-two years there is no record on the session book of a single instance of a divided vote. They have well represented the people and sustained the pastors. Eleven different elders fill the period of twenty-two years and each of them was or is a Sabbath school worker. Their honored names are as follows:

H. W. Brandt,
Aaron Myres,
Sam'l. F. Smith,
Augustus Gilbert,
Peter Tait.

Jacob Schlager,
Gurnsey Osborn,
Sam'l. N. Thatcher,
Wm. Emery,
Daniel White,
Kennedy Johnson.

Of those who are present Mr. Wm. Emery has served the longest as ruling elder. Nine years he has been clerk of session, and during that time Presbytery has never appended an objection to his minutes. Mr. Peter Tait has for several years also served as collector and Sabbath School Superintendent. The Sabbath School in this church has been a prominent feature in it. We have very imperfect records of its officers and work. Mr. Alfred Stanley and Miss Emma J. Noble were the first to organize a Presbyterian Sabbath school on this hill, and Mr. Stanley was the first superintendent in the school house, and Mr. Aaron Myres followed in the work when the school was transferred to the church building. During Mr. J. B. Gregg's term of office the school numbered 200, and at Harmony 70. His favorite department of church work was in the Sabbath School. He was known throughout the county by his deep interest in that work, and when he removed to Binghamton the school here presented him with Matthew Henry's Commentary. Mr. Peter Tait, Mr. David Harris and Mr. David Gailbraith followed respectively as Superintendents. We have very imperfect minutes of our Sewing Society. Its Presidents have been Mrs. H. Seymour, Mrs. J. B. Gregg and Mrs. J. Bourne. Our ladies have taken a prominent part in the recent temperance services and prayer meetings. As far as can be ascertained a brief mention should be made of service of praise and its leaders. Elder S. N. Thatcher filled the offices of organist, leader in singing, sexton and elder. Mr. John Medway succeeded him as leader, and Miss Flora Tingley as organist, and since the time of her departure, Miss Ella White has presided at the organ. Without giving a list of our sextons, we feel constrained to say that most of our cleanliness and comfort in this house is due to the efforts of the present incumbent, Mr. Wm. C. Frith.

During the twenty-five years this church has sent forth two clergymen and one college professor—Rev. Raphael Kessler, Rev. Adelbert J. Schlager, and Mr. Herman C. Brandt, professor in Hamilton College. These men have done valuable service, and still are a power in the church and in the cause of Education, which we are happy to record. Mr. Kessler was licensed to preach by the Montrose Presbytery, in April 1857, in 1858 graduated at Auburn, and took charge of a German mission church in New York City, remaining there four years and a half. He was ordained in 1859, and went from New York to the joint charge of Mt. Pleasant and Uniondale Pa., where he labored five years, and then to Webster Groves, near St. Louis, five years—was in Wilmington one year, and then accepted a call to Pontiac, Ill., preaching there two years and a half. At present he is not preaching on account of his health being somewhat impaired.

Rev. A. J. Schlager, son of elder Schlager, graduated at Hamilton College and the Theological Seminary in New York city, was licensed in April, 1872, and was ordained and installed over the churches of Mt. Pleasant and

Uniondale, Pa., by the Presbytery of Lackawanna, Nov. 20th, 1872. A precious revival attended his labors there. In 1875 we find him in charge of a mission in Scranton, which this year has been abandoned by Presbytery on account of insurmountable difficulties which no pastor can remove. How many clergymen shall be converted and sent forth from this church during another quarter of a century? Are any of our children now dedicated, at least in a parent's faith and prayers, to the gospel ministry? Summing up the work of this church, it has as far as we can find on record, expended as the lowest amount during 25 years, \$31,741; it has gathered or received 408 members, and it is a singular fact that when the church was organized there were eight members, four by letter and four by profession, and thus far 204 have been received by letter and 204 by conversion. It is also singular that all the clergymen who have preached in this church as stated supplies, home missionaries or pastors, are still living; none have gone to the General Assembly and church of the first born. It will be impossible to estimate the work and the influence which this church has had with its pastors and members on this growing and changing community, its united counsels, its harmony and union with sister churches, which still continues. During these twenty-five years we have had a centennial in one particular. One hundred times have God's people gathered at the communion table and there have been very few if any such periods where none were added to the communion. Thus God has blessed the business and spiritual departments in this church. He has preserved us from any serious divisions, and any roots of bitterness in the days of old.

Fathers and mothers, form a new attachment to your church to-day; let your old love for her be warmed again. Fathers and mothers, some of you are growing old, your earthly pilgrimage and church work must soon end. Work while the day lasts, and may your day brighten to its close. Many who gathered with you here to lay the foundations of God's house have gone, but their work still remains, and will your work remain here. Thank God and take courage. All you have done for God in this beloved Zion you will never regret. This church has been to many of you, under God, your Bethel oftentimes and if it should be God's will it may still be to you the gate of heaven. Soon you will ascend the higher church hill of heaven and enter the church of the first-born. Cherish to the end the peace of this earthly house. Some of you for many years have helped to rear and foster this church. You have a pleasure in its prosperity, but will you not to day resolve to go a step further and enter the Ark of salvation which you have done so much to build here. Let the seed corn of the kingdom fall into your hearts and bring forth fruit. To close this sermon in the words of another: "Young men and women, measure your blessings here to-day, and then try, by this glance at the days of old, to obtain some estimate and receive some appreciation of the cost of them. It was for you and those after you that this mighty work has been done. On you the responsibility of this church, with such a history, now presses. We bring this house of the Lord, with all its treasures, its joy, and its immeasurable blessings, and lay its burden upon you. Will you love this dear old church as your fathers have loved it? Will you labor and sacrifice as they have done, with holy joy, that its fruits may continue to be worthy of them and their Master? They give it to you with all its precious memories and sacred associations, and charge you not to forget the days of old, the years of ancient times. It has led you with joy up its shining way and now bids you to be worthy of these fathers and mothers in Christ, who only ask you to love this church as they have loved it, and to follow them as they have tried to follow Christ.

Another quarter of a century and the most of us will be among that cloud of witnesses which bends over us to day. May those that gather to talk of our day, and to consider our work, look without shame, and speak with grateful hearts, as we do to day of the work of these fathers, for what God has wrought by our hands."

NOTE,

The Harmony Church with their pastor were present with us. In a letter the Rev. Mr. Peterson says: "Our people decided that they would dispense with the morning service here, and attend at Susquehanna to listen to the Centennial Historical discourse which you have in anticipation—to honor our mother church by attending the the service proposed, as we also feel that your history is in a large sense the history of our church." After the sermon a collection and pledges were taken, and in ten minutes \$210.00 was raised cheerfully, to be paid in three months. We begin our second quarter of a century free from debt.

"LAUS DEO."

